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TRUTH, HERITAGE, AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH BAPTISTS

In the summers of 1986 and 1989 I studied English Baptist history at Regent's Park College, Oxford. The lectures of Leon McBeth, Barrie White and others turned me to a serious reading of seventeenth and eighteenth-century English Baptist writings. As I am a philosopher by profession and a Baptist, I read with the eyes of philosophy, particularly its truth-theory, and theology. I am in awe of what I find. English Baptists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offer a distinctive notion of truth tied to the gospel story. Baptists have been studied historically and theologically, often rather well, but philosophical studies are rare, if they exist at all. This modest contribution to the literature on English Baptists is a study of the notion of truth as it developed among General and Particular Baptists in the eighteenth century.

English Baptists of the seventeenth century sought a 'thorow Reformation, having formerly seen the mischiefs of half Reformation'.¹ As a part of their reformation they dared a thoroughly radical notion of truth.² The primitive core of truth, they confessed, the deep-down bone marrow of truth, was the good story, the gospel; there, too, was our relation to truth, our entering into it, finally our unity with it. All knowledge - that is, all sound, enlightening knowledge - began with the truth which was the being and person of God in relation with persons within the gospel story. Listen to two representative Baptists speaking radically of truth. An anonymous writer in 1645 affirmed: Christ Jesus is 'the personal truth' and every believer is a 'Microchristus, the Epitome of Christ mysticall'.³ Paul Hobson, in 1647, agreed: 'The truth is one, and never truly understood by any, till they be one with it . . . none can understand but such that live in God, and so receive the knowledge of his mind, not from the second but first hand, which is the privilege of the saints, who know faslehood, and that by living in the truth.' We have no truth except 'first hand' - 'which we see and enjoy in Christ', who is truth in that 'he is the cause declaring truth', 'the object, or matter declared by truth', and 'truth essentially, and the Word was God'.⁴

The first English Baptists looked to Jesus Christ for truth, mindful to 'live, not upon knowing, but upon being known of Christ'.⁵ They began quite simply with someone real and with actual relations. Nowhere did they elevate any form of truth above the ontological (truth is what is), the theological (truth is God), and the personal (truth is persons in relation). Truth, after all, is the *good story* - the intrinsic evidence of God in human life. Truth is the God who is 'truth itself'⁶ and who relates to persons in creation and providence, pre-eminently in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, in the Holy Spirit, and in the occasions of liberty and reasonableness.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Baptists did not stay the course set by their forebears because of 'debilitating strife' and 'intellectual revolution', which 'challenged the way people viewed God, the universe and themselves'. Their condition 'was simply lamentable', for they were 'almost destitute of vital

religion'.⁷ Importantly for the essay at hand, Baptists were enchanted not by a truth identified with the concrete gospel story but by the abstractions of a form of contemporary rationalism. Truth was lost amidst general truths, empirically and logically established, leaving Baptists with a distorted truth. As a consequence, 'the bright hopes' of the seventeenth century began 'to grow dull', and Baptists entered 'the most stagnant and lethargic period of Baptist history'.⁸

About 1738 a spiritual upsurge changed the Protestant world. The awakening came not from Baptists and other dissenters, but from Anglicans, such as George Whitefield and John Wesley. Their new emphasis upon the gospel soon found a response among Baptists. Dan Taylor and the New Connexion of General Baptists, as well as Andrew Fuller and the Particular Baptists, discovered, just as their forebears had, that truth is the gospel story. Indeed, so complete was their awakening and remembrance of the seventeenth-century inheritance that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century they restored vitality to most of the Baptist churches, reversed the earlier rationalistic trends, brought the 'thorow Reformation' to its classic issue, and established a Baptist heritage of truth, if not a tradition.

This paper seeks to tease out in its historical, systematic roots just one aspect of the dramatic story of eighteenth-century English Baptists, namely, the Baptist pilgrimage to truth. Eighteenth-century Baptists did not ordinarily offer theoretical statements on the idea of truth. On the contrary, within a mosaic of life and thought, they presented their understanding of truth in several dimensions and in depth. A 'notion' emerged amidst a myriad of activities and a host of books, booklets, circular letters, tracts and treatises. Such publications were not philosophical works on truth, but expressions of the faith and practice of the gathered churches. Still, a distinctive philosophical notion of truth was present in them.

A rigorous philosophical reading of the historic Baptist materials reveals that the Baptist position on truth, though linked inextricably to historical twists and turns, was systematic. At first reading the Baptist notion of truth appears unsystematic, for the philosophical expressions of Baptists did not follow the standard, systematic rubrics which stress theory, essential definitions and logical coherence. Nevertheless, their position was systematic. Ludwig Wittgenstein taught us well, though we often forget our lessons, that systems more often than not bear family resemblances, particularly if the systems are linked to the concrete. Such was the case as regards the English Baptist notion of truth. The notion did not possess an essential core, a theoretical structure, shared in every aspect by all its expressions. We rather find a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing, sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. We find a cluster of traits, a network of relations, which gives systematic shape to the notion of truth. The themes and the clusters of themes do not always hang together in a tight-knit system of necessary ideas, nor need they do so. In the fashion of the parts of a diary or the events which shape a person's life, they bear a family resemblance to

one another.

The following essay unpacks the family resemblances which shaped eighteenth-century Baptist thought on truth. It divides into historical sections on the first half of the eighteenth century, 'The Brambles of Modern Rationalism', and on the second half, 'A Considerable Revolution'. It also focuses attention on the primary themes which formed the Baptist notion of truth: (1) the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ, (2) the Bible, (3) praxis, and (4) reasonableness.

THE BRAMBLES OF MODERN RATIONALISM

1. General Baptists: 'No Good Story to Preach'

At the beginning of the eighteenth century some General Baptists had questioned their seventeenth-century heritage which equated truth and the gospel story. By mid-century the majority of General Baptists had quite frankly abandoned the equation. They increasingly spoke of an inner light flooded with experience which reflected the outer world, and thereby they held to the new enlightenment, even if philosophically ill-defined. When René Descartes affirmed, 'cogito ergo sum', the individual became the authority in knowledge. Knowledge was no longer limited to the saint and scholar: anyone could reason, doubt, or experience and hence acquire knowledge. But an egocentric, subjective, and rationalistic starting point was required - a requirement General Baptists willingly embraced.

As a consequence of their Cartesian turn, in the wake of the Act of Toleration (1689), General Baptists were drawn steadily into a rationalistic denial of the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Many Baptists found truths in individual experience and became Unitarians, Quakers, or members of non-denominational churches. Nothing was so mysterious that it could not be thoroughly explored and fully set by experience. An abstract, one-eyed reason, one generated by experience, set what counted as truth. For instance, Matthew Caffyn, affected by the rationalism of the late seventeenth century, held to 'a light in every man. . . that leads. . . into all the ways of God'. Unlike the Quakers and rationalists, for Caffyn the light was tempered by the Scriptures which showed 'things that are more excellent'.⁹ In his turn to the 'light', Caffyn puzzled 'himself with endeavoring to explain inexplicables' and, unable to fathom the mysteries of the Trinity and of Christ by means of the experiential data present to the self, he concluded that they could not be true.¹⁰

In the first half of the eighteenth century, most General Baptists forgot their seventeenth-century heritage of truth, but not all. A remnant was committed throughout the century to the equation of the gospel and truth. Nowhere was this equation more evident than in the remnant's commitment to a salvation open to all people, to personal faith in Christ, and to an acceptance of all who obeyed Christ 'according to their light'. Moreover, the remnant held to the gospel story expressed in the 1660 Confession, in the six principles of Hebrews 6.1-2 (repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection and judgment), in the six articles of the

1704 reconciliation of the General Assembly and the General Association, including their belief in the 'one living and true God' and the Trinity,¹¹ and in the Orthodox Confession of 1678, which revered the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds (Article 38). Further, the remnant insisted that truth was 'Contained in & May be fully proved by the Holy Scripture' - 'the whole & Only Rule' - and proved by the 'assemblies' which 'make one church, and have lawful right . . . to act in the name of Christ, it being of divine authority.'¹²

Although a faithful remnant of General Baptists in the eighteenth century disclaimed 'Men's inferences' and 'humane Compositions as a test or Boundary of any Christians Faith', and although they used the truth tests of the 'plainwords of Scripture' and the community of believers, equating truth with the 'one only true God' and the gospel story, nevertheless they coloured their approach to truth with the strokes of contemporary rationalism.¹³ A rational quality appeared in their speech and its substance, and truth became little more than beliefs. The reality (being) of truth was often reduced to six principles; the Living God was seen as a 'Perfect Mind' reflected in a 'Gospel system', and the subjective was confused with the personal. Cartesian truths too often lay on the surface of the memory of the remnant and blurred the vision of the good story.

Thomas Gibbons described at first-hand the confused condition of General Baptists: 'much iniquity' abounded, 'and but little, little true religion', though there was 'a pious remnant'.¹⁴ Leon McBeth says, 'they had no gospel to preach, and they preached no gospel.'¹⁵ In philosophical terms, General Baptists covered over gospel truth with the data present to the consciousness and arranged by it, so they preached experiential truths in a Cartesian guise.

2. Particular Baptists - 'Salvation is of the Lord'

In the first half of the eighteenth century Particular Baptists remembered something of their seventeenth-century heritage. Both John Brine and John Gill, for instance, although they fell prey to contemporary rationalism, held tenaciously to the idea that God was 'truth itself'. God, they claimed, was 'true in and of himself', in the 'reality of his being' and in 'his perfections'. Truth, trinitarian in shape, was 'predicated of each Person in the Godhead': God the Father was 'God the truth', Christ was 'the truth', the Spirit was 'of the truth'. Further, God was 'true in his works' and 'his veracity displayed in them'. God's 'works of creation, providence and grace are all true', as are 'his essential Word, his Son', and 'his written word'.

Brine and Gill also held to their seventeenth-century heritage of truth when they spoke of knowledge by acquaintance. Three stages, they argued, comprised the road to truth. First, the mind in sin suffered from 'total loss and privation' and an absence of truth. Second, the tests of consistency and coherence established some doctrinal truths, yet these 'true principles' fell short of 'evangelical truths'. Third, the spiritually enlightened person knew by acquaintance 'the things themselves' or 'the things' of the Spirit freely given by God.¹⁶ The third stage, knowledge by

acquaintance, entailed several things. (a) 'Spiritual and divine knowledge', the dynamic and 'object' of which is God, is known only by the 'new creature' in 'eternal union' with God.¹⁷ (b) The objects of faith 'are not bare axioms or propositions, for . . . the act of the believer does not terminate at an axiom but at the thing' or 'the thing itself'. Faith opens not to 'a bare naked assent of the mind' to truths, but to God's person and presence.¹⁸ (c) Intuition and deduction draw out and structure the implications of knowledge by acquaintance.¹⁹ (d) 'External revelation' is correlated with the 'internal revelation' of the believer. Revelation occurs 'not only in His Word' but 'to individual believers' through the activities of the Holy Spirit.²⁰

Something of the seventeenth-century notion of truth was clearly present in Brine and Gill. Without doubt, both preserved a part of the Baptist heritage when rationalism was damaging the churches. Yet they finally diverted Particular Baptists into high Calvinism, and so strong was their rationalism that, though they began with the claim that 'salvation is of the Lord', they did not fully unfold a model of truth in keeping with the claim.

Contemporary rationalism, therefore, had opposite effects among Baptists early in the eighteenth century.²¹ In contrast with General Baptists who evaluated truth-claims by the givens of experience and reason subjectively understood and abstracted from the living truth of the gospel story, Particular Baptists identified the given with an intensification of their conviction 'that salvation is of the Lord', and they inferred a rational system from this abstract, axiomatic starting-point. In a world grown weary of systems, Particular Baptists cast a systematic theology, for 'the man without a system [is] little more than a sceptic'.²² The system, Baptists argued, began with the axiom that God was the exalted Ruler over all - the Creator, the Lawgiver, the Saviour, and the Master of all that happens; and persons are far removed, 'an unworthy part of the dust of Zion'.²³ An abstract emphasis thus deflected Brine and Gill, the 'great age of Calvinistic scholasticism' began, and a 'strict orthodoxy' became the 'cardinal virtue of the churches'.²⁴

But why was the axiom true? No appeal was made by the Particular Baptists to biblical or gospel standards of evidence. Instead deductive and inductive arguments were marshalled as evidence of God's existence and the Bible's veracity, and thereby of the axiom of God's sovereignty. Interestingly, the axiom was not secured by means of rational intuition, as in orthodox Cartesian rationalism. Gill stated, 'I shall begin with the Being of God, and the proof . . . of it'. Eight arguments were offered for the existence of God: universal belief, the 'law and light of nature' (general instinct), the 'works of creation', the 'sustenance and governance of the world', miracles, 'fulfilment of prophecy', 'conscience', and 'judgments in the world' (the fact of retribution).²⁵

God's existence could be proven by arguments, but natural theology could not speak truly of God's 'essence, perfections, persons, works, and worship'. Only the Bible gave proof of these. So Gill found it necessary again 'to secure the ground'

by establishing through arguments the Bible's 'divine authority' and, hence, the material content of his axiom. Among his many proofs, four were central.²⁶ First, the Bible was authoritative because the 'penmen' wrote as they were 'directed, dictated and inspired' by God in both the 'matter' or content and the 'words'. The 'very words' were given, lest the 'real sense' of revelation should be missed, as if, Gill thought in the mode of contemporary rationalism, there were real meanings, rational ones, apart from culture and history. Second, the Bible's authority was established by the Bible's perfection, which related 'all things necessary to salvation, everything that ought to be believed and done'. Third, in words reminiscent of Descartes, Gill spoke of the Bible as 'clear and plain', or as 'sure, certain, and infallible'. Some parts of the Bible were 'dark and obscure', yet the clear passages within the rational harmony of the whole clarified the opaque. Gill argued in an *a priori* manner for rational perspicuity: the Bible's source was 'the Father of Lights' who 'cannot lie', certainly all that came from God was light and clear. Fourth, revelation was necessary for ignorant, depraved people who lacked knowledge of creation, salvation, immortality, etc. God might be sovereign for Particular Baptists but, in a mischievous way, the sovereign force of argument established the truth of God's sovereignty.

3. Rationalism and Forgetfulness

Baptists of the seventeenth century opted for a Christian rationalism which held that 'the supreme rational agent is not man but God'.²⁷ People reason, to be sure, but 'all human reason was a kind of humble creaturely participation in the divine reasoning' - a pilgrimage within the dialectical relations of God, revelation, creation, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the believer, reasonableness, and liberty. The elements of the dialectic were inseparably bound yet not identical. For instance, Holy Scripture existed for the sake of Christ, yet Christ was not accessible apart from the Bible. Truth also depended upon faith, the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, the exercise of reasonableness, and the presence of liberty. All truth was based in 'the new creature which is begotten of God', who 'needeth not the outward scriptures, creatures, or ordinances of the Church . . . seeing that he hath three witnesses in himself, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; which are better than all scriptures, or creatures whatsoever'.²⁸

The most serious danger facing this Baptist version of Christian rationalism and its dialectical approach to truth was the failure to remember the concrete nexus that is truth; it was a turn to abstractions which covered over the Underlying Ground and Primordial Relations that let ideas and experiences, beliefs, judgments, principles, systems, methodologies, and criteria of correctness show up in the first place. The most serious danger, a perennial one for Baptists, was to forget that kind of truth which lay singularly 'in the face of Jesus', in the good story, and which settled the 'whole claim of evangelical truth'.²⁹

Early in the eighteenth century Baptists who abandoned Christian rationalism

ensnared themselves in the brambles of contemporary rationalism and suffered a painful lapse of memory. They deprived the truth of its essence as a story. Truth's domain was seen abstractly as what was present or ready at hand - what was placed before a subject as an object. The concrete truth 'in the face of Jesus' was forgotten. In particular, five brambles arrested the Baptists' consciousness and contributed to the failed memory of both General and Particular Baptists in the first half of the century.

First, just as contemporary rationalists, Baptists were enchanted by the immediately given, and they oscillated between the givens of experience and of logic. General Baptists were fascinated with the givens of experience and its abstract truths. Their empiricism often blended with Arianism and Unitarian tendencies. This move turned them to a liberalism which challenged orthodox theology and left them divided. Particular Baptists made a different move but one still within the stance of the immediately given. They began with the logically demonstrated given of the axiom of God's sovereignty and deduced abstract truths from it, with occasionally frightening logic. Their framework of hyper-Calvinism, conservatism, and logic distorted the doctrine of grace, minimized evangelism, and supported immorality (in the form of Antinomianism). Both enchantments with the givens of contemporary rationalism proved equally devastating.

Second, contemporary rationalism centred upon general truths, the essence of which was conceptual, propositional and systematic. Truth was often reduced by Baptists to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, 'true principles', and orthodox or unorthodox beliefs, that is, to axioms or a message for 'upright and attentive minds'. Error was in 'contradistinction to all mere opinions and sentiments, and opposed to all human traditions and inventions'; while truth was its opposite - valid ideas and correct judgments linked to experience and logic.

Third, contemporary rationalism was theoretical in that it proceeded as if the self were a pure subject or thinker for whom the world was a questionable object (one demanding of proof).

Fourth, it was egocentric in that the subject in reflection was isolated from the world which it knew. The thinking did not begin with redemptive relations, or with any relationships, certainly not with the good story, but with the self set apart from the world which it had to come to know. General and Particular Baptists wrongly identified the starting point of a knowledge of truth with a subjective one. The reality of the gospel story, of God in relation to persons, is hardly subjective. In fact, it is neither subjective nor objective. God and relations are no more objects in the world than they are the subjective states of experience or reason, neither are they known objectively or subjectively. Truth is constituted by the relationships existing in and of the God who is 'most true'. Truth is relational; it is neither objective nor subjective. Truth is known in story; it is not known objectively or subjectively. Nothing stands between God and persons, surely no subject or object, no subjective or objective knowledge. But early in the eighteenth century the

contemporary rationalism adopted by Baptists ushered in an era of forgetfulness of the story and its dialectical relations which ground all things. Thus Gill and other Particular Baptists began their system not with the gospel story but with an axiom which was established by what was present to the subjective consciousness and by arguments marshalled so as to know the objective realm. They sought first to 'secure the ground [they] go upon'. In similar fashion, Caffyn and other General Baptists began with the certainty of the subject and its experience, and then sought to establish the existence of some reality (a Holy Trinity or Divine Christ) which was seen as a problematic thing-in-itself existing externally to subjective consciousness. For all Baptists under the sway of contemporary rationalism the problem of knowledge was to secure a subjective or an objective sort of truth. What was in question for Baptists was the existence and sovereignty of God, the authority of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, or the reality of the Holy Trinity. What was not in question was the reality of consciousness and the data (experiences, ideas) present to it.

Fifth, contemporary rationalism's starting point was normally limited by the representative theory of perception, by deductive and inductive logics, and by the correspondence and coherence tests of truth. Accordingly, the mind never directly contacted the real but only the givens of its own experiences and ideas, which, if properly known and sufficiently tested, might be a bridge to the real. Seventeenth-century Baptists insisted upon evidence of a reasonable kind tied to a life of 'inlightened conscience' illuminated by the Holy Trinity and the gospel story. Every major truth needs a qualifier in the life-world to fix its specific meaning and provide evidence. In the first half of the eighteenth century, however, Baptists, as a matter of course, reduced the reasonableness of an 'inlightened conscience' to reason and its attendant deductive and inductive logics and, as often, separated the tests of correspondence and coherence from any semblance of the gospel story. When they did this, truth was authenticated by 'matters of fact' and the 'relation of ideas', by empirical and rational tests, and by logics apart from the gospel story and apart from the redeemed mind.

The use of the tests of correspondence and coherence, just as the use of induction and deduction, was not in itself wrong-headed. What was wrong-headed was the forgetting of the underlying conditions - the nexus at the heart of the good story - that allowed such criteria of correctness to show up in the first place. The good story authenticates the tests and logics in matters of truth; the tests and logics do not authenticate the good story.

With the force of their Cartesian revolt in the first part of the eighteenth century, Baptists mischievously dislodged their search for truth from its depths. The gospel story was largely lost. All things became mere objects. Baptists pursued general truths amidst the abstractions of a subject-object dualism, an egocentric perspective, ideas and experiences, axioms, statements, systems, methods of correctness, etc. Baptists turned to fragments and simplicities, to abstractions which were more

readily handled than totalities and complexities. Quite easily, and often deceptively, they substituted the partial for the complete and established it as the controlling factor in matters of truth;³⁰ and thus did they entangle themselves in the brambles of contemporary rationalism and its misplaced concreteness.

A CONSIDERABLE REVOLUTION

Baptists did not remain enchanted with the givens of contemporary rationalism or the slothful ease of their certainty. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century they once more chose the gospel story and its hard work of faith as their model of truth. Truth became again a Living Truth - the story of the real person of God in creative, redemptive, and providential relation to human persons. As a result of their choice, the younger Robert Hall observed of Baptists at the end of the century, 'a considerable revolution has been effected in the sentiments of the denomination . . . Truth has shone forth with brighter lustre.' The revolution, which returned Baptists to a desire for a 'thorow Revolution', was due to 'Mr Fuller, the dissenters in general, and the Baptists in particular',³¹ who focused their notion of truth in four clusters of family resemblances: (1) the Christological, (2) the biblical, (3) the practical, and (4) the reasonable.

1. Christological Truth: 'the simplicity of the gospel'

Andrew Fuller, more than any other person, restored Baptists to their historical position, modelled truth after the gospel, and secured truth's centre in Jesus Christ. Any view of truth which undermined the gospel story he vigorously opposed. 'O my God,' he cried,

I find myself in a world where thousands profess thy name; some are preaching, some writing, some talking about religion. All profess to be searching after truth; to have Christ and the inspired writers on their side. I am afraid lest I should be turned aside from the simplicity of the gospel.³²

Truth, the deep-down bone marrow of truth, was 'the simplicity of the gospel' (the 'heart of Christianity'), what Dan Taylor and the New Connexion of General Baptists called 'the essential doctrines of the gospel', 'experimental religion', or 'primitive Christianity'.³³ Truth, in other words, was Jesus Christ; thus, what was central to truth could be seen 'in the face of Jesus'. What we see is a truth different from the truths of any contemporary rationalism. We see an incarnate, personal, relational, and historical truth - a Christological truth.

(a) *Truth is the incarnate Jesus Christ.* 'In the face of Jesus' Baptists saw truth in the primary, not in a derivative, sense. They confessed that Jesus revealed God, persons, relations and events, and let them be as they truly were. The appellation of 'The Truth' belonged to Christ, Taylor affirmed, because Christ was the 'true substance' of biblical history, the 'author and fountain of truth', the soul's 'true and solid satisfaction', and the 'great teacher sent from God' who gives 'true and infallible directions'.³⁴ With Jesus we learn that the gospel is more than good

news, though it is that. The gospel is the good story in which the invisible God is the visible Jesus; it is 'the grand emanation from the fountain of blessedness, an overflow of the Divine goodness' upon sinners through Jesus Christ. Baptists, assembled in Rutlandshire in 1777, testified 'we receive a full Christ'. Consequently, truth's shape was not that of some idea, experience, axiom, or the like. Truth was the real person of Jesus Christ - God incarnate and in relation to persons in life. 'The truth' was the 'full Christ' in whom all truth existed and interrelated.³⁵ The parts and the whole of 'Divine truth' were 'presupposed' by the gospel of Christ, 'included in it', 'arise from it', or bore some 'intimate relation' to it.

(b) *Truth is the 'thing itself' related to faith.* Baptists held that God did not 'communicate God's mind to us by giving us a set of principles, arranged in the form of a scheme'. Neither do we have a creed which 'formally includes all things necessary to be believed'. In the face of Christ we learn that 'divine truth . . . must be mixed with faith, or have faith mixed with it.'³⁶ The objects of faith 'are not bare axioms or propositions: the act of the believer does not terminate at an axiom, but at the thing.' To believe an axiom is only to believe 'letters' and 'words', but 'to believe the proposition is to believe the thing.' All linguistic units are only means, necessary ones, for the conveyance of both meaning and reality. But language and meanings do not 'meet our faith, unless something' real is affirmed. Thus Fuller spoke of biblical language and meanings as, 'properly speaking', the objects of faith and as revealed. Yet he did not confuse them with the real object - with the Christ who as the 'thing itself' related to faith.³⁷

(c) *Truth is union with Christ.* Robert Hall, sen., posited as part of the Christological notion of truth a threefold union with Christ - 'visible, vital, and virtual'.³⁸ Visible union was intellectual assent to truths. Vital union was 'a divine connexion' between the 'true believer' and Christ - 'a oneness in perception, affection, interest, and end'. Virtual union was a primordial or 'real connexion subsisting between [Christ] and the elect' prior to vital union. Visible union did not yield truth, no matter how orthodox the beliefs or how demonstrated the moral principles. Truths were not truth. Truth was a primordial (virtual) and personal (vital) union with Jesus Christ. Northamptonshire Baptists, assembled at Kettering in 1781, described this union in terms of intimate acquaintance.³⁹ They argued that the problem of truth was not one of some rational error, ignorance, or disbelief of assorted truths: 'Enmity is the disposition of the devil', a real and personal relation, albeit a negative one, and it had to be destroyed by repentance and faith, if truth was to be gained. Objectively defined, Northamptonshire Baptists continued, faith was 'Christ and the substance of gospel truths' (truths understood as 'matters of fact'). Subjectively defined (in general) faith was 'nothing more nor less than the prevalence of evidence' or 'a crediting report made, or representation given, of persons and things'. Subjectively defined (in particular), faith or intimate acquaintance was 'saving faith', which began with 'the report of the gospel

concerning the Saviour' but additionally required the 'approbation of Christ and the gospel' - a warmly commending reception of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit by the believer. Saving faith was 'communion here', 'uninterrupted felicity hereafter', 'the infinite beauty and bounty of Jehovah, for ever and ever', and the presence of 'internal dispositions and holy conversations', which signalled the character of Christ in the 'sons of God'. William Carey agreed: our 'inclination to conscientious activity' was 'one of the strongest proofs that we are the subjects of grace, and partakers of . . . universal benevolence . . . eminent in the character of God.'⁴⁰

(d) *Truth is incarnational and eschatological.* Baptists affirmed that Christ's face transformed truth into historical reality.⁴¹ Christianity was 'in its infancy', they observed, but 'a train of light first put in motion by God' would continue 'to spread till it has filled the whole earth'. It was not the repetition of what was fully put in place but a future and an eternal unfolding of novelty in which mercy and truth would meet 'in the flesh'. 'The religion of Jesus' transformed time (past, present, future) rather than eliminated it. Thus, 'if such be our religion', Baptists reasoned, they could not 'calmly assent to the most interesting and solemn truths of Christianity', or not as general truths, that is, They needed to beware of 'habit', the 'frequent recurrence of objects', the 'pressing upon our senses', and the obviousness of 'the world' as the sureties of truth. They had to avoid intellectual assent to truths and the force of universal experiences. And they had to turn 'our attention to religion and eternity' and mingle them with 'the ordinary stream of [our] thoughts'. The Western Association, meeting in Wellington in 1787, affirmed, we 'will walk as in his sight' and 'stand, as it were, at his tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and every thing will appear in its true proportion and proper colour.'

2. Biblical Truth: 'Tell us what God says'

Dan Taylor quoted a countryman who, when the preacher kept saying, 'I think. . .', called out, 'What signifies it what thou thinkest? Tell us what God says!'⁴² No words better unveil the heart of the Baptist notion of truth. For Taylor and the New Connexion of General Baptists, as well as for Fuller and Particular Baptists, truth was inextricably linked to the Bible.

The Bible was the written revelation of truth, but Baptists did not seek the Living Truth in a turn to a Bible isolated from the gospel story. For them, the Bible only told 'what God says' within the context of the good story. Particular Baptists, assembled at Leicester in 1797, argued that the believer had 'an inward conviction of the truth of the leading doctrines of revelation'.⁴³ That said it all, and well. John Ryland said, 'How well THY word and providence agree'.⁴⁴ The Wellington circular letter of 1787 concurred: 'With the Bible in your hand, and this blessed experience in your heart, you compare them together', and their correspondence convinces you of their heavenly origin. You 'live a life which is above the wise'. The source of it all and the means of its support are finally the revelation given by

the Spirit.

The Bible, though true, Taylor contended, derived its truth from its foundations in the reality of the revealed 'moral law', of faith and divine assurance, and of the leadership of the Spirit.⁴⁵ Moreover, in section 1 of his *Catechism*, Taylor based the Bible's truth in the 'Author of the scripture', in inspiration, and in the 'witnesses of the leading facts', who were moved by the Spirit (Q 5-7). Further, he claimed, God confirmed the scriptures 'with signs and wonders, and divers miracles' (Q 21) and by the 'blood' of those 'slain for the word of God' (Q 23). 'The truth of scripture' also had a foundation in 'the heart of every true believer' (Q 24), who is guided by 'light from above'.⁴⁶ Biblical truth was additionally set by the Bible's purposes, i.e. to teach doctrine, convince of sin, correct errors, show duty, test right and wrong, and 'try sermons' (Q 9-15). Above all, it was set by Christ and the Holy Spirit. Baptists of the Midland Association, assembled at Yeovil in 1785, graphically wrote, 'Take the person, work and grace of Christ - the operations and comforts of the Holy Spirit, out of the Bible, and out of christian ministry, and you leave the one and the other like a body without a soul'.⁴⁷

Things might be learned from 'other quarters' than the Bible, even things which 'subserve the knowledge of God; but the knowledge of God itself' had to be sought in the Bible, 'for here only can it be found'.⁴⁸ The Bible was the 'written revelation of God', which, as the 'perfect rule of faith and practice', supplied a 'revelation of the mind and will of God'. It was 'written by men who wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit' who continued to 'illuminate the mind' and 'guide us into truth'. On the one hand, 'the Holy Spirit teaches nothing but what is true, and what was true antecedently to his teaching it.' On the other hand, 'the test of Divine illumination . . . is whether that in which we conceive ourselves to be enlightened be a part of Divine truth as revealed in the Scriptures'. Still, one could not finally say by what means the Spirit imparted truth. The 'ordinary way' was for the Spirit to proceed in conjunction with the Bible, but, Fuller noted, 'this has not been the uniform method'. Prior to Moses, 'there was no written revelation, and till the coming of Christ no ordinance for preaching the word', whilst revelation directed the Eastern magi. One now sought God's light not only by reading the Bible but by praying, reflecting and meditating upon it.⁴⁹

The scope of the biblical truth was limited by Baptists. The Bible, Fuller said, did not 'teach us astronomy, or geography, or civil government, or any science which relates to the present life only'. It taught two things: information about God, persons, sin and salvation, and imperatives about life. In other words, the Bible contained 'truth, and nothing but truth', which Fuller identified with the word of redemption: 'its history, its prophecies, its miracles, and its doctrines'. Only certain things, according to Abraham Booth, comprised the 'well attested revelation from God', namely, the singularity (one God), character, relations (creation, providence, redemption), and trinitarian shape of God, the incarnation and mediation of Christ, accounts of regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, resurrection, and the

'instituted worship of God'. The Bible's truth, Northamptonshire Baptists likewise affirmed, pertained to the reality of things ('that things are'), their 'nature and quality', both 'what they are' and 'whose they are'. In these things alone, Baptists agreed, the Bible was a 'touchstone of truth'.⁵⁰

In summary, a nexus of relations constituted biblical truth: the polarities of God and persons, of inspiration and illumination, of Holy Spirit and writer and reader, of written and unwritten revelation, of natural and special revelation, of information and imperatives, and of gospel purposes. In the Baptist notion of truth, the Bible was thus a necessary but not a sufficient condition of truth. The gospel story was the sufficient and the necessary condition of truth.

3. Practical Truth: 'of a practical nature'

Baptists affirmed that truth did not merely have practical bearing but in itself was 'of a practical nature'.⁵¹ Some kinds of truth were only conceptual, but 'not religious truth'. Truth was the real 'system of love and goodness' - 'an overflow of the Divine blessedness' in life.

Fuller unpacked something of the theoretical understanding of what it meant to say that truth was the practice of abundant life. He argued: 'A strong presumption . . . must exist for or against a system, as it is found to promote or diminish the cardinal virtues of the Christian character - love, holiness, and faith. (a) *Love*. Truth was a 'system of love' which commended itself to 'every man's conscience'. Truth could be tested by the presence or absence of love. A song by Benjamin Keach plainly held as early as 1700, 'If every Truth, Lord, be by us receiv'd in sincere Love, It will to us an Evidence be, we born are from above.' (b) *Holiness*. A person 'intimately acquainted with the Christ' spoke 'not only by precept, but by a holy practice'. Any contentment short of perfection was false, while the incontestable presence of holiness signalled truth. (c) *Faith*. The presence of faith also warranted a truth-claim. Error, which was disbelief in Christ and the gospel (that which is unreal is false), arose from a 'dark cause', such as 'unrenewed persons', nominal Christians, and 'unsanctified wisdom'. If what was false arose from the lack of natural power or of evidence, then 'it is a mere mistake'. But if its source was 'an evil heart', it was an error.⁵²

The actual practice of Baptists gave classic expression to the notion that practice was truth. Truth had legs. 'The Particular Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen', 1792, was among the firstfruits of the new enthusiasm which identified truth and practice; it was the hallmark of Baptist praxis. Abraham Booth, pursuing the same missionary logic, urged that 'we should not forget the myriads at home', and by 1798 John Rippon's *Baptist Annual Register* was reporting numerous societies and missions. Other domains of life signalled the identity of practice and truth. Caleb Evans, at Bristol Academy, taught an evangelistic theology. James Dore's sermon, 'On the African Slave Trade', and the expulsion of James Rodway and Jacob Grigg from Sierra Leone unveiled a growing opposition

of truth to slavery. John Howard, who was a hearer of Samuel Stennett, championed prison reform. William Fox universalized the Sunday School movement. John Rippon's *Register* and the *Baptist Magazine* empowered works among the oppressed. The hymns of Anne Steele and John Fawcett spoke of revival. Publications, such as Abraham Booth's *The Reign of Grace*, argued that 'complete provision is made for the certain salvation of every sinner'. John Sutcliff of Olney issued his 'Prayer Call', so that 'sinners may be converted, the saints edified, the interest of religion revived, and the name of God glorified'.⁵³

In these and other ways, Baptists sensed that life's domains were not antithetical to truth but rather what truth was. A certain practice was not a reflection of truth, as in contemporary rationalism, but its heart. Truth was not merely something applied; it was (in itself) something done. Baptists were 'duty bound', argued Carey, and could but respond to 'Evangelical truth', according to Rippon. Abraham Booth urged that they had to proclaim 'new life'. This same, self-same message testified that truth was a way of life. Religion was 'genuine', if it was the 'source of the warmest and most interesting feelings' and 'will often be full and pour itself forth'. If the gospel had not moved people to live Christ's life, Baptists argued, then 'we may be assured we have never experienced its force.' Error arose when they confined Christianity 'to seasons of worship' and 'shut it out from ordinary concerns of life'. Truth required that religion was life's 'centre', yet it did not require them to 'spend more time in religion than in ordinary concerns'. Truth combined the vertical and the horizontal in life's practice.⁵⁴

4. Reasonable Truth: 'requires evidence'

Baptists allowed a considerable, though subordinate, role to reasonableness in the shape of truth. In all things, including the gospel, presumption always required evidence.⁵⁵ Booth's comment was typical of the Baptist stance: he was 'open to conviction, and acceptance of truth, by whatever means it may please God to inform me of it.'⁵⁶

Reason tied to sense experience knew some things, like God's existence and some of God's perfections - wisdom, omnipotence, etc. Reason, however, was at a loss in other religious concerns, for it was 'confined to a point in our existence', to its relative ideas, and to 'disorder and sin'. Natural, fallen reason was limited but not reason enlightened by 'the supreme excellence of the Christian dispensation', and thereby aware of the Trinity, incarnation, etc. The cross literally transformed what counted as truth, for 'mercy and truth are met together'. Truth did not have a rational definition; mercy defined it. In the 'dispensation of grace', Baptists said, God gave us 'all things'.⁵⁷

No one-eyed reason sufficed, either. The Baptist penchant for a broadly conceived reasonableness lodged in the gospel nexus permeated all that they did. Reason did not set the truth by itself. Reasonableness, along with the elements of the gospel story, established and made plain the truth, but only when a 'lasting

impression' was 'made on the mind' by the gospel.⁵⁸

William Carey's arguments for world missions and Abraham Booth's arguments against slavery were indicative of the Baptist approach to reasonableness,⁵⁹ but it is worth noting the furniture of the Baptist mind in the case for the inspiration of the Bible. The case offered *a posteriori* arguments which admitted of 'historical defence' and 'testimony' in the world,⁶⁰ and which employed the standards of coherence, pragmatics, fulfilment of prophecy, miracles, correspondence, historical precedent, simplicity, agreement with science and philosophy, 'internal connexions' and 'external connexions' (logical, empirical, and historical coherence and contextualization), intersubjective agreement, John Locke's standards for the reliability of witnesses, etc.⁶¹

In the *Catechism* Taylor ruled out rational truth-claims tied to 'human traditions', 'sentiments and practices of great men', and 'examples of good men' (Q 16-20). Still, in a manner typical of Baptists, he used the human standards of empirical adequacy, coherence, pragmatism, the community, and history.⁶² Two instances show the way in which the only true God, most assuredly, persuaded and satisfied the redeemed mind. (a) Taylor claimed that 'the truth of the New Testament history is greatly confirmed by its agreement in the leading facts of it, as well as in many incidental circumstances, with the best ancient historians'. Indeed, truth was 'the exact conformity of our words with the facts we relate.'⁶³ Taylor approvingly quoted John Locke,⁶⁴ truth in factual matters 'depends upon the testimony of particulars - a sufficient number of witnesses - the integrity of those witnesses - their skill and understanding - their design - the consistency of the parts and the circumstances of the relation - and the evidence of contrary testimonies.' If these standards were applied to 'sacred history', Taylor contended, then it 'will be found to have all the evidence of authenticity which can be reasonably desired.' 'Nothing', wrote Taylor, 'can be more fair and reasonable than these rules', and 'by these rules' the Bible 'should be tried'. (b) Taylor, again following Locke, tested 'the relations of ideas' in the Bible by means of coherence. The coherence of the Bible's parts and the relation of its parts to the whole established 'the truths of the gospel'.⁶⁵

THE CLASSIC HERITAGE OF TRUTH

At the dawn of the eighteenth century, General and Particular Baptists explored the parameters of the new rationalism of the era. By its end both groups gave classic expression to a Christian rationalism inextricably tied to the concrete gospel story and to the notion of Living Truth first set by seventeenth-century English Baptists. They thereby contributed to the meaning of 'truth' by insisting that truth was what was real, personal, and divine, a dialectical nexus of God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the believer, reasonableness, revelation, the Bible, and practice. And they did much more. They firmly established as a classic heritage among Baptists, perhaps as a tradition, the view that truth was finally the gospel story.

This achievement was of no little import. In the first two hundred years of Baptist existence the central model of truth was that of the gospel story of God in Christ Jesus reconciling the world. This view was not simply one among many, though rationalism introduced other views into Baptist life. The equation of truth and the gospel story constituted the heart of the Baptist pilgrimage to truth, and it comprised a heritage which was definitive of what it meant to be a Baptist.

What is truth in the classic Baptist heritage? Baptists at the close of the eighteenth century well said, 'To enjoy God'. To live in God and to 'receive discoveries, impressions, and gracious communications from God'. To contemplate, love, praise, obey, and trust 'through a Mediator as revealed in his word'.⁶⁶

NOTES

- 1 Christopher Blackwood, *Storming of Antechrist*, 1644, title page.
- 2 Frank Louis Mauldin, 'A Notion of Truth Among Seventeenth-Century English Baptists', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, Macon, Georgia, 18, Spring 1991, 39-57.
- 3 Anonymous, *The Ancient Bounds, or Liberty of Conscience*, 1645, 28.1. See Thomas Helwys, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, 1612, p. 69; Henry Haggard, *The Foundation of the Font Discovered*, n.d., p.1; Leonard Busher, *Religious Peace*, 1614, p.15.
- 4 Paul Hobson, *A Discoverie of Truth*, 1647, title page, pp.2,17,21.
- 5 Hobson, *op.cit.*, 22.
- 6 'Second London Confession', 1677, chapter 1, article 4.
- 7 Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1986, p.3; Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, Nashville, TN, 1987, p.151.
- 8 B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 1983, p.138.
- 9 Matthew Caffyn, *The Deceived and Deceiving Quakers*, 1656, p.2.
- 10 Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, 1818, I, p.464.
- 11 W. T. Whitley, *Minutes of the General Assembly*, 1909, I, pp.xxvi, xix, 88. Cf. Goswell Street, 1728, I, p.149.
- 12 Whitley, *op.cit.*, 1909, I, pp.51,103,113,149, xxx-xxxii. Cf. Taylor, *op.cit.*, I, p.470.
- 13 Revelation, for instance, is of 'the Perfect Mind of God' and is known by an 'inner light'. And, in matters of 'divine Writ', Baptists urged that we 'apply these truths' to our 'Minds'. 'Causes of Decay', *The Letter of the Committee*, General Baptist Assembly, 1773, pp.11-12. Cf. S. Acton, *Truth without Disguise*, 1732, pp.2,41.
- 14 Thomas Gibbons, *The State of the World in General, and of Great Britain in Particular, as to Religion*, 1770, p.23. Cf. 27, 32; John Hursthouse, *An Epistle to the Baptized Churches in Lincolnshire*, 1729, pp.3-21; The Goswell Street Assembly, London, 1740, pp.49,58,95-6; and Whitley, *op.cit.*, II, 1910, pp.2,32-33,141.
- 15 McBeth, *op.cit.*, p.158.
- 16 John Brine, *A Treatise on Various Subjects*, revised by James Upton, 1813, pp.39,126-7,169-85, 195.
- 17 John Gill, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 1769, pp.172-191, 198-201.
- 18 Gill, *op.cit.*, 1770, pp.730-46,705-13.
- 19 John Brine, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Eternal Justification*, 1732, reprinted Baptist Standard Bearer, 1987, pp.11-13.
- 20 John Gill, *Articles of Religion*, 1720, Article 1; *Expositions of the New Testament*, 1810, III, pp.610, 594.
- 21 R. Brown, *op.cit.*, pp.5-6.
- 22 Olin C. Robison, 'The Legacy of John Gill', *BQ* 24, July 1971, p.112.
- 23 Sydney F. Clark, 'Nottinghamshire Baptist Beginnings', *BQ* 17, 1957-8, pp.162-9.
- 24 D. Mervyn Himbury, *British Baptists - A Short History*, 1962, p.66.
- 25 Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, I, pp.1-10.
- 26 *ibid.*, I, pp.11, 12-25. Thirteen additional arguments are found in the preface of Gill's *Old Testament Exposition*, Vol.I.
- 27 J. V. L. Casserley, *The Church Today and Tomorrow*, 1965, p.27; cf.10-41.
- 28 'Propositions and Conclusions Concerning True Christian Religion', 1612-4, Article 61.

- 29 'Second London Confession', 1677, Chapter 1, Paragraph 4; Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, three volumes, ed. J. Belcher, Philadelphia, 1845, III, p.525; Dan Taylor, *A Catechism or the confession of faith*, 1785.
- 30 See A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York, 1969, pp.10,24-5; and Frank Louis Mauldin, 'Misplaced Concreteness in the Problem of Evil', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 11, 1984, pp.244-6.
- 31 Robert Hall, jun., *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.*, ed. O. Gregory, New York, 1835, II, p.452.
- 32 John Ryland, *Memoirs of Mr Fuller*, p.116.
- 33 Fuller, *Complete Works*, III, p.525; Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, 1820, p.72; William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev.ed., Valley Forge, PA, 1969, p.341. Cf. 340-44. For Fuller's summaries of the gospel, see *Complete Works*, I, pp.82,162-7, 398-403,417-9, 691-2; II, pp.343-367; and 'Confession of Faith', Articles 1-20.
- 34 Dan Taylor, *The Consistent Christian*, Leeds, 1784, p.18.
- 35 Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.690,691-2,695; II, p.526; 'Confession of Faith', Article XIII; 'The Beauty of Social Religion', 'Circular Letter from the Ministers and Messengers', Rutlandshire, 1777, p.4. See John Ryland, ed., *Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, Charlestown, 1818, pp.57-8; *The Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. Joseph Belcher, Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, n.d., pp.209-17.
- 36 'On Reading God's Word: Circular Letter from the Ministers and Messengers of the Baptist Churches of the Northamptonshire Association', Kettering 1813, Andrew Fuller Moderator, p.5.
- 37 Fuller, *Complete Works*, II, p.340.
- 38 Robert Hall, sen., *Help to Zion's Travellers*, Halifax, 1781, pp.48-59. See Parts I, II, III for Hall's statement of the gospel story.
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- 40 William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*. . . , Leicester, 1792, pp.3,4-5.
- 41 'The Excellence of the Christian Dispensation: Circular Letter, The Elders, Ministers and Messengers of the Several Baptist Churches, Being met in Association at Wellington', Western Association, 1787, pp.1-10. W. T. Whitley says that Robert Hall, sen., wrote the letter.
- 42 J. Fletcher, 'Dan Taylor and the English Baptists', *The English Baptists*, ed. John Clifford, 1881, pp.112,123.
- 43 'The Divinity of the Christian Religion: Circular Letter, from the Baptist Ministers and Messengers assembled at Leicester', 1797, pp.9,10.
- 44 John Ryland, *Faithfulness of God in His Word Evinced*, 1773, pp.1,10. Cf. 11, 22-23, 30-31,35, 73-77, 82-91,106-7.
- 45 Dan Taylor, 'Articles of Religion of the New Connexion', 1770, Art.2, 3, 5.
- 46 Dan Taylor, *Scripture Directions and Encouragements to Feeble Christians*, 1777, p.14.
- 47 'Circular Letter, The Elders, Ministers, and Messengers of the Several Baptist Churches', Midland Association, Yeovil, 1785, p.5.
- 48 Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.160,161,483,695; Ryland, *Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, p.54; and 'The Divinity of the Christian Religion', pp.3-5. Cf. William Newman, *A Plan for the Academical Preparation for the Ministry*, 1782, pp.30,34.
- 49 Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.160, 483, 688-90, 699; III, p.525; Abraham Booth, *An Apology for Baptists*, 1778, p.20; 'The Divinity of the Christian Religion', pp.3-5. Cf. Dan Taylor, *Duties of Ministers and People*, Leeds, 1775, pp.10,11; *Christian Baptism*, 2nd ed., 1777, p.8; *Strictures*, 1777, p.7; *A Modest Inquiry*, 1772, p.5.
- 50 Abraham Booth, *A Confession of Faith*, 1769, pp.17-23; Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.161-6, 699; II, pp.88, 196, 699; III, pp.352, 356, 357, 528; 'The Nature of Faith', pp.10-14.
- 51 Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.530, 529-31. See Mauldin, 'A Notion of Truth Among Seventeenth-Century English Baptists', pp.52-4.
- 52 Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.160, 693; II, pp.153-170, 188-195, 598-606, 649-54; III, pp.531-55; 'The Nature of Faith', p.14; and Thomas Eakins, *Life and Writings of Andrew Fuller*, 1863, p.165; 'Evidences of Grace: Circular Letter', 1795; Benjamin Keach, *Spiritual Songs*, 1700, Hymn 55; and Daniel Turner, *Essays on Various Subjects*, Oxford, 1787, I, p.90.

- 53 Abraham Booth, 'Address to friends of Evangelical truth in general and to Calvinistic Churches in particular'; Caleb Evans, 'Charge and Sermon', Bristol 1773, p.6; John Sutcliff, 'The Nature, Evidences, and Advantages of Humility: Circular Letter, Association assembled at Nottingham', 1784, p.12; *First Principles of the Oracles of God*, Halifax, 1783, p.3.
- 54 'The Excellence of the Christian Dispensation', pp.8,9.
- 55 'The Nature of Faith', p.5.
- 56 A. Booth, *A Confession of Faith*, 1769, pp.24-5. For a typical view of truth categories, see *An Apology for Baptists*, 1778, 'Table'.
- 57 'The Excellence of the Christian Dispensation', pp.2-5. Cf. Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.696-7; 'The Beauty of Social Religion', p.4; and Turner, *Essays on Various Subjects*, I, pp.ii-v, 1-46.
- 58 'Doctrine, Experience and Practice: Circular Letter', Leominster, 1787, p.4. Cf. the view that reason 'exercises itself on scripture'. Dan Taylor, *The Scriptural Account of the Way of Salvation*, Halifax, 1772, p.4.
- 59 Carey, *An Enquiry*, Sect.I, pp.8-13; Abraham Booth, *Commerce in the Human Species*, 1792, reprint L. McBeth, ed., *Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, Nashville, 1990, pp.138-41.
- 60 Eakins, *Life and Writings of Andrew Fuller*, pp.160, 164-5; John Ryland, *Advice to Students of Divinity and Young Ministers of the Gospel*, 1770, pp.11-15.
- 61 Fuller, *Complete Works*, I, pp.161-7, 685-90, 696-701; 'The Divinity of the Christian Religion', pp.5-9; Booth, *A Confession of Faith*, pp.14-17. Cf. Turner, *Essays on Various Subjects*, I, p.72; and Joseph Stennett, *The Christian Strife for the Faith of the Gospel*, 1738, pp.12-13.
- 62 See Dan Taylor, *An Essay on the Truth and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, 1819, pp.35, 48, 81-3; *A Dissertation on Singing in the Worship of God*, 1786, pp.18, 36, 40; Dan Taylor *et al.*, 'On Associations: Circular Letter', Coventry, 1779, p.5; Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, p.128; Whitley, *Minutes*, 1910, II, pp.72-3, 194; and Adam Taylor, *A History of the English General Baptists*, II, p.110.
- 63 Dan Taylor, *an Essay on the Truth and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, p.35; *Consistent Christian*, p.11.
- 64 John Locke, *Human Understanding*, L.iv.chap.4.16. Taylor also appeals to Dr Beattie's *Christianity*, Vol.I, p.52, wherein credibility, motive, competence, and lack of deception are norms.
- 65 Dan Taylor, *An Essay on the Truth and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, pp.48-9, 53, 81-3. Cf. use of syllogism in 'Of the Sin of Adam: Circular Letter', Broughton, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1778, p.7.
- 66 See 'God's Kingdom: Circular Letter of the Elders, Ministers, and Messengers, Western Association', 1798, pp.1-11.

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BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1994

This meeting will take place in Bridlington at 2 p.m. on either Tuesday, 26 April, or Wednesday, 27 April 1994. We are sorry we cannot be precise at the time of going to press, but are dependent on those arranging the programme of the Baptist Assembly. The Annual Lecture will be given by the Revd Dr W. C. R. Hancock. Again, the subject will be announced later but it will be based on his doctoral thesis, 'Nonconformity and Politics, 1893-1914, with special attention to the rise of the Labour Party'.